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by the models used for soft paste, but which underwent a slow transformation under the influence of the school of David, represented in the industrial arts at Percier. With case 57 begins the series of more modern porcelain, and that the experiments to which the products of Sèvres owe their present physiognomy. Case 60—the last—contains biscuit.

All decorated pottery, if it is to be as perfect as its nature will permit, ought to allow of firing body and decoration simultaneously; that is to say, one and the same temperature must suffice to fuse the colors and to incorporate them with the glaze, and this latter must attach itself absolutely to the incipient. Some of these colors are fluid, like the cobalt blues, and mix with the glaze without forming a relief; others are thick and not transparent. In China, those pieces of porcelain which have uniform or variegated ground are decorated according to the principle just enunciated. The flower designs, animals, or figures, colors of great fusibility are employed, and sometimes even those colors are used which can be fired in the muffle. But as the composition of the body and the glaze of Chinese porcelain allows firing at a much lower temperature than that which is necessary for Sèvres porcelain (the composition of which differs somewhat from the Chinese, the colors, especially those which fuse at a medium temperature *couleurs de demi-grand feu*), combine with and are enveloped by the glaze. The only color known at Sèvres which could be submitted to the same firing as the body, was for a long time the lapis-lazuli blue, the well known radiant and deep blue of Sèvres. All the others were either *couleurs de demi grand feu*, or muffle colors. These colors, however, not only made the palette of the painter all the richer, but even too rich. There was a discord between the nature of the ground and that of the surface. Very often the glaze did not cover the painting, and the latter had the same aspect that it might have presented had it been painted on faience or on japanned tin. Hence when the study of the conditions of decorative art had shown that an intimate harmony ought to exist between the ornament and the material, it became necessary to seek colors which could stand the same temperature as the porcelain, in order to decorate the latter as it ought to be decorated, and as it is in the East.

The Curator of the Museum, M. Champfleury, is active, and takes an interest in all manifestations of art, especially the immensely popular form of art which finds its expression in Ceramics. He is seconded by public favor, and enjoys a European fame for the order and method he has exhibited in the classification of the objects exhibited.

## ÆSTHETIC MISTAKES IN FURNISHING—THE PARLOR CENTRE TABLE.

BY ADA CONE.



ALL the furnishings of a room should subserve the purposes for which the room is designed to be used, and any piece of furniture or ornament which does not subserve the purpose of the room is superfluous and out of taste. This proposition in the abstract perhaps none will deny. To obey it in actual furnishing, however, seems to require quite another matter, and to require a sterner ability to apply logic than most people possess; which inference is thrust upon one by a glance at the parlor furnishings in vogue, so much of which ignores the proposition completely.

For an example of the neglect, to apply theory in furnishing, take the parlor centre table. It cannot be contended that because a few persons of taste have discarded it, it is therefore out of fashion, it is an institution, as orthodox as the hymn book. It is practically universal; in expensive as well as in humble houses still the objective point and the *piece de resistance* of the room. And yet it is a clear violation of the law.

The fact that this piece of furniture holds so tenaciously its place, though contrary to convenience and taste points to an ideal in furnishing the parlor other than that of convenience and taste and if we cast our eyes over the room as usually furnished we shall find that the whole scheme is consistent with the centre piece, and it will no great discernment to name the ideal. Every object in the room, it will be found, is set out to challenge the eyes for its own intrinsic merit, implying directly that the common ideal of the parlor is a museum.

If this view were the correct one there would be no impropriety in placing objects for inspection and in obliging guests to thread their way carefully about for fear of upsetting them. And furthermore it would be in accord were we to place printed slips saying; "Do not Handle;" "Have a Care," etc., for in a museum visitors are properly subordinate to the display and must be content to lose themselves in the objects about them.

But authority says that the parlor is a withdrawing room, for the reception of guests; a place to meet others than the family, where greetings and conversation are the amenities. Let us inquire whether the museum idea is compatible with this definition.

A room in which to receive. The first demand in such a room must be space. It should appear generous in its welcome and to this end should be as spacious as can be afforded. The objective figure of the bedroom is properly the bed, and fashion for once, agreeing with taste, has drawn the bed out from alcoves and niches where formerly it was stowed away, and elevated it to its rightful position, the most conspicuous place in the room; in the dining room the table fills the eye, and if it is wished to see how fitly let it be once moved to the wall and the sense of defective arrangement will instantly be touched; desks and tables—even centre tables—are for study, workroom and library; mirror for dressing room, couches for boudoirs, but for the parlor there should be space and convenient seats. These are of the first importance and the only necessities.

Greetings and conversation are the amenities. Then the guests are of more importance than the bric-a-brac, and the more strenuously the furnishings demand attention, the more impertinent they become.

This relegates a great many things we have set store by to limbo, and among them the centre table. And I cannot but think that everyone who has had the ill luck to jostle one, with its frail load, and its slippery cover making accident always imminent, will say good riddance to rubbish, and hope that the friend who devised the fashion is where he can have joy of them.

For the museum idea it may be said that the impulse which places our trinkets, the prettiest things we have, where our visitors can see them, is a natural one, born not entirely of vanity but largely of the desire to entertain. But this is beside the question of what the furnishing should be to answer æsthetic requirements. No room overloaded with small moveables can have any character; it is inhospitable to fill with objects space which might be left for the free movement of guests, and a room set out with devices to catch the eye suggests a barrenness of mind in the guest who, not capable of entertaining each other by interchange of thought, must be amused with toys, like children.

It will not be easy for those whose ideal parlor has been a show room to follow to its logical conclusion in furnishing, the theory of a room solely to make guests at ease in. For if we subscribe to the proposition laid down at the beginning, that, furniture which does not promote the purpose of the room is superfluous; if we concede that the parlor should be furnished only as a sitting-room for people, then we are forced to agree that our little moveables are out of taste and must be incontinently turned out; and this leaves us in what seems a frightfully shorn condition to people who have been used to losing themselves among bow-legged tables, easels, stuffed birds, and tidies with large bows.

But we are not forbidden ornamentation; only that sort which vulgarly asks inspection, and inhospitably fills space. The parlor should, in truth, be the most beautiful room in the house, but its ornamentation should be like that of a jewel casket. On the walls may be expended the utmost wealth of art; the floor and ceiling may be jewelled; a pier table may fall into its place between uprights as an element of the architecture. If the room is large, statuary, porcelain jars, or their decorative equivalent, may be judiciously placed in corners, and other wares to break space agreeably; but such floor interruptions must be only with the purpose to make space more effective and not at all to display the object, space or promoting the interchange of thought between guests remaining always the ruling idea. All should be substantial, solid, and should fall harmoniously into place as part of the well setting.

To this end what is spent in bric-a-brac should be put into a tapestry hanging; what goes for fragile epergnes, and showily bound books which no one opens, into a painted canvas, a fresco, or a rug. The best models for a reception room are found in photographs of historical houses of state.